

Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education, president Harm Eggena III, vice president Angie Johnson, Bea Volk, Tim Trettin, and Wendy Fullerton, and former members, Rick Demaray, Scott Woodruff, Gary O'Connor, Terri Engels, Ann Sullivan, Bill Dolan, Lisa Paulus, and Pat Rooney. I would also like to recognize superintendent Steve Ward, former superintendent Gary Schwartz, director of buildings and grounds Norm Kelly, board secretary Janice Kuhlert, Neil Fullerton, and Neil Wedeking.

As we mark the 10th anniversary of the Harkin school grant program in Iowa, I am obliged to point out that many thousands of school buildings and facilities across the United States are in dire need of renovation or replacement. In my State of Iowa alone, according to a recent study, some 79 percent of public schools need to be upgraded or repaired. The harsh reality is that the average age of school buildings in the United States is nearly 50 years.

Too often, our children visit ultra-modern shopping malls and gleaming sports arenas on weekends but during the week go to school in rundown or antiquated facilities. This sends exactly the wrong message to our young people about our priorities. We have to do better.

That is why I am deeply grateful to the professionals and parents in the Rudd-Rockford-Marble Rock Community School District. There is no question that a quality public education for every child is a top priority in that community. I salute them and wish them a very successful new school year.●

WEST DES MOINES COMMUNITY EDUCATION

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, in Iowa and across the United States, a new school year has begun. As you know, Iowa public schools have an excellent reputation nationwide, and Iowa students' test scores are among the highest in the Nation.

I would like to take just a few minutes today to salute the dedicated teachers, administrators, and school board members in the West Des Moines Community School District and to report on their participation in a unique Federal partnership to repair and modernize school facilities.

This fall marks the 10th year of the Iowa Demonstration Construction Grant Program. That is its formal name, but it is better known among educators in Iowa as the program of Harkin grants for Iowa public schools. Since 1998, I have been fortunate to secure a total of \$121 million for the State government in Iowa, which selects worthy school districts to receive these grants for a range of renovation and repair efforts—everything from updating fire safety systems to building new schools or renovating existing fac-

cilities. In many cases, this Federal funding is used to leverage public and/or private local funding, so it often has a tremendous multiplier effect in a local school district.

The West Des Moines Community School District received two Harkin fire safety grants totaling \$332,011 which it used to make fire safety repairs at the Walnut Creek Campus and at Fairmeadows Elementary School. The Federal grants have made it possible for the district to provide quality and safe schools for their students.

Excellent schools do not just pop up like mushrooms after a rain. They are the product of vision, leadership, persistence, and a tremendous amount of collaboration among local officials and concerned citizens. I salute the entire staff, administration, and governance in the West Des Moines Community School District. In particular, I would like to recognize the leadership of the board of education—president Mark Lyons, vice president Terry Tobin, Barbara Burnett, Jill Hansen, Susan Moritz, Tom Suckow, and H. Milton Cole, and former board members Jim Aipperspach, Jane Fogg, Curt Lack, Pete Leo, John Paule, Jeanne Taylor, John Ambrosion, Gretchen Tegeler, and Deb Thomas. I would also like to recognize superintendent Tom Narak, former superintendent Les Omotani, former associate superintendent Galen Howsare.

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RETIREMENT OF LYNN CARPENTER

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I recognize and commend the service of Lynn Carpenter of South Dakota. Mr. Carpenter is retiring from the Department of Veterans Affairs after over 34 years of honorable service to the agency.

Lynn began his career with the Department of Veterans Affairs in 1974

after serving with the United States Army for 2 years. He continued his service in the National Guard for 18 more years, retiring in 2005. Lynn has served in various positions within the VA system, most recently as the Veterans Service Center Manager at the Sioux Falls VA Regional Office.

During his tenure with the VA, Lynn has been an invaluable resource for veterans and their families. He has provided important counsel and advice to VA officials, veterans service officers and congressional members and their staff on a range of issues. Throughout his time with the VA, he has seen many changes in the system and was able to address the ever changing needs and concerns of veterans and their families.

I have appreciated Lynn's willingness to take the time to answer questions and concerns from my staff members. I commend his dedication and commitment to making sure every veteran's case or question was always handled in a timely manner. Lynn can take great pride in his work during his Federal service career. In his retirement, he will spend more time fishing at his lake home in Big Stone. I wish Lynn, his wife Debbie, and their family all the best in retirement. It is with great honor that I share his impressive accomplishments with my colleagues, and I thank him for his service to this Nation and its veterans.●

BLUE WATER CREEK MASSACRE

● Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, today I wish to speak in regards to the Blue Water Creek Massacre of 1855. On September 3, 1855, while camped near the Blue Water Creek in present day Nebraska, a group of Lakota were attacked by COL William S. Harney and his troops. According to Army records, 86 Lakota were killed and 70 captured. The Battle of Blue Water Creek is also known as the Battle of Ash Hollow or the Harney Massacre according to the Nebraska State Historical Society, which maintains a historical marker, along U.S. 26, 1½ miles west of Lewellen, NE.

There are several historical accounts of what transpired that day in 1855 and the Little Thunder Tiospaye contacted me because they seek to commemorate and to preserve for future generations the history surrounding Mni To Wakpala—Blue Water Creek. They are the direct lineal descendants of Wakinyan Cikala—Little Thunder—a man who was amongst the leaders of that Lakota camp destroyed 153 years ago. Additional leaders who survived that morning include Iron Shell, Spotted Tail, and Red Leaf, each of whom also bore lineal descendants living upon Sicangu territories today.

According to the family, oral history passed down through generations tells the story of the younger Little Thunder, a boy who survived the Massacre and subsequently journeyed to join his relatives once again. Without his survival, the Little Thunder Tiospaye

would not exist today. I would like to recognize their work as they seek to honor their ancestors by collecting historical accounts, and locating important artifacts from this time in history. Accordingly, the Lakota language includes an expression that fits their mission: *Hecel lena Oyate kin nipi kte*, so that our people may live.●

TRIBUTE TO GEORGE WARRINGTON

● Mr. LAUTENBERG. Mr. President, in light of today's historic vote on the Amtrak reauthorization legislation, I wish to honor a great transportation leader and a son of New Jersey George Warrington, who passed away at his home in Mendham, NJ, on December 24, 2007. During a public service career that spanned more than 30 years, Mr. Warrington held an influential and decisive role in the development and continued success of public transportation systems not just in our State of New Jersey but throughout the entire region. His role in the early development of NJ Transit helped make the agency what it is today one of the largest and most successful transit agencies in the country.

George Warrington's contributions to public transportation cannot be overstated. His work to secure funding for NJ Transit in the 1970s was crucial to the creation and early development of the agency. He later served as vice president and general manager of NJ Transit's rail operations and brought a necessary focus on customer service, ontime performance, and repairing the rail system's infrastructure. He worked tirelessly to expand regional rail capacity by adding additional seating in cars and parking spaces at stations across the State. He also promoted the development of new rail lines, such as the Midtown Direct Montclair service and Newark Light Rail extension, and he spearheaded the addition of key rail stations such as Hoboken Terminal and Secaucus Junction. These initiatives were central in creating and maintaining a successful public railroad transportation system in New Jersey and the surrounding region, and I was proud to secure Federal funding for these efforts.

George's efforts on one project, in particular, will help secure the economic future of the New Jersey-New York region and that is the new Hudson River Rail Tunnel. Also called the Trans-Hudson Express, THE Tunnel, part of the Access to the Region's Core, ARC, Project, this new rail tunnel will ensure that travel between New Jersey and Manhattan by rail will be available well into the future. Existing tunnels are already at capacity during peak hours, with trains moving through them at a rate of one every 2½ minutes. Without this new tunnel, our region's economy will suffer. New Jerseyans would lose out on a convenient and environmentally friendly way to commute to work into New York

City and New York City would lose out on a strong and dedicated labor pool of New Jersey workers. George garnered critical early support for the new tunnel project from both sides of the river, a feat acknowledged by many experts as vital to the project.

George Warrington also listened to passengers and employees, a critical feature of any successful organization. He considered their input in new rail car designs, such as the popular new multilevel cars. These rail cars eliminate the dreaded "third seat," while adding to the overall number of seats in the car.

For several years, George also served as executive director of the Delaware River Port Authority, which governs the Delaware River port system, four major vehicle bridges in the region, and the PATCO rail system. He is credited with speeding up project delivery times and managing the conversion to collecting tolls in just one direction on the bridges.

George Warrington must also be recognized for his significant contributions to national transportation as Amtrak's corporate president and CEO and chief executive of its Northeast corridor. He was instrumental in the launching of Acela Express, the nation's first high-speed rail line, as well as carrying out the completion of the electrification of the entire Northeast corridor rail line between Boston and Washington, DC, another project I was proud to secure Federal funding for. The Northeast corridor now offers the country's premier high-speed rail service and carries more passengers than all of the airlines combined between key northeastern cities. George will always be remembered as an important advocate of a strong national rail system.

Mr. President, while George Warrington passed away on December 24, 2007, his legacy lives on through his family and through his lasting contributions to the rail industry both in New Jersey and throughout the Nation. On behalf of the people of New Jersey, I am proud to commemorate his many achievements to make New Jersey and our Nation a better place and convey our best wishes to his family and friends.●

HONORING REV. DR. WALTER SOBOLEFF

● Ms. MURKOWSKI. Mr. President, when Americans think about what they most admire about my home State of Alaska, the breathtaking scenery first comes to mind. What I most admire about my home State of Alaska are the people, and in particular our Native Elders.

Our Elders are the bearers of our uniquely Alaskan culture. They have accepted the responsibility of ensuring that succeeding generations know where they came from. They preserve and transmit the traditions that make Alaska different from anyplace else.

Looking at the face of an Alaska Native Elder is like looking at the concentric rings in the trunk of a tree. Every line on that face represents a precious slice of Alaska history.

It would be a vast understatement to characterize the Elders as witnesses to Alaska history. They are the living embodiment of Alaska's history. They were the first generation of Alaskans to experience and adapt to the challenge of living in two worlds. They have come to embrace the traditional world of subsistence and the modern world of the Internet in the same breath. Some like the individual I speak about today have devoted their lives to preserving Alaska Native languages as spoken and written languages for all eternity.

Today I pay tribute to a most respected Tlingit Elder, the Reverend Doctor Walter Soboleff, who will celebrate his 100th birthday on November 14, 2008. Walter Soboleff was born on a small island called Killisnoo near Admiralty Island in Southeast Alaska. His father was the son of a Russian Orthodox priest serving in Southeast Alaska. His mother, a Tlingit Indian. Four languages were spoken in his home: Russian, German, English, and Tlingit.

Walter Soboleff was educated at a US Government Indian school on his island and subsequently at the Sheldon Jackson School in Sitka. Several years after graduating from Sheldon Jackson with a high school diploma he enrolled at Dubuque University in Iowa, receiving a bachelor's degree in education in 1937 and a divinity degree in 1940.

Ordained as a Presbyterian minister he returned to Southeast Alaska to take the pulpit at the Memorial Presbyterian Church in Juneau. The church, which was built to minister to the Tlingit people, opened its doors to all. Its congregation included Caucasians and African Americans, and Filipinos as well as Haidas and Tsimshians.

We take diverse congregations like this for granted in 21st Century Alaska. It must be remembered, though, that Jim Crow racial segregation laws and practices were quite prevalent in pre-World War II Southeast Alaska.

Reverend Soboleff emerged a key player in the maintaining and enhancing the Tlingit culture, serving seven terms as President of the Alaska Native Brotherhood and broadcasting church services in Tlingit on the radio. From 1962-1970 he took his ministry to the water traveling on mission vessels to Native villages, logging camps and Coast Guard facilities in the archipelago of islands that make up Southeast Alaska.

In 1952, Reverend Soboleff accepted a commission in the Alaska Army National Guard, serving as Chaplain for 20 years, retiring with rank of Lieutenant Colonel on February 1, 1973.

In 1970, Walter Soboleff founded the Alaska Native Studies Department at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He